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ABSTRACT

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), an arm of the Library of Congress, leads a highly successful national program to produce and distribute books and magazines for blind, visually impaired, and physically handicapped individuals. A fostering relationship exists between NLS and a network of 143 regional and local libraries that serve blind and handicapped readers directly. By developing and disseminating centralized policies and procedures at the national level, NLS is able to sustain a uniform quality of service throughout the library system. Each year NLS receives permission to reproduce, with no royalties charged, more than 2,000 book titles for loan. In addition, NLS has systematically developed a collection that provides access to some 220,000 recorded and embossed titles in 16 million copies for a variety of blind and handicapped users. Copyright clearance, which is vital for a program that reproduces so many titles, and cataloging are important features of the NLS approach: both cassette and flexible disc recordings can be used only with special playback equipment. NLS also has a role in the narrative reproduction or braille embossing of materials and the distribution of discs, cassettes, and playback equipment. The NLS serves as a resource for a clientele of extremely varied tastes and needs. (SLD)

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1994

*National Library Service
for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped*

The Library of Congress

ROSS 211

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The Sole Source

**Washington, D.C.
1994**

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Introduction

Over the past 63 years, the Library of Congress's National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) has emerged as the leader of a highly successful national program to produce and distribute books and magazines for blind, visually impaired, and physically handicapped individuals.

Free, tax-supported public libraries have long been accepted as a basic right of all Americans. NLS functions as the largest and frequently the sole source of public library materials and services for a segment of the population who cannot readily use the print materials of local libraries. As an integral part of the Library of Congress (LC), NLS selects, produces, catalogs, and distributes millions of copies of books embossed in braille as well as "talking" books and magazines recorded on phonographic discs and cassette tapes.

Abetted by landmark federal legislation and strong congressional support, NLS has grown from a small beginning under the Pratt-Smoot Act of 1931 to a library service that annually circulates more than 21 million volumes of books in braille and recorded formats to a readership in excess of 760,000 U.S. adults and children.

In carrying out its congressional mandate to serve as a primary source of free books and magazines, NLS does not publish textbooks or involve itself in formal education, training programs, or the details of rehabilitation. Its mission is to serve as a general, public-type library, not a remedial or welfare agency.

The development of NLS into an outstanding national library resource has been fostered immeasurably by its position within LC. This position provides the NLS ready, economical access LC's lode of essential library functions, and, in turn, helps to fulfill LC's commitment to reading as a fundamental human activity.

A fostering relationship also exists between NLS and a network of 143 regional and local libraries that directly serve blind and handicapped readers. A great majority of these libraries operate within state library systems that are also committed to serving the informational needs of individual readers.

By developing and disseminating centralized policies and procedures at the national level, NLS is able to sustain a uniform quality of service throughout the library system for blind and physically handicapped readers.

How NLS Functions

NLS functions within the Library of Congress as a service organization to a widespread group of users. Although the congressional mandate to serve blind and physically handicapped individuals is relatively broad, NLS maintains and enforces requirements limiting its free, tax-supported materials and services to individuals who are legally eligible.

Standards of eligibility for blind readers to receive government talking books and machines in the 1930s allowed for their use by adult readers who had "a defect of vision that made it impossible or unsafe to read ordinary printed books...and to be unable, without undue [financial] sacrifice, to buy a talking-book machine."

The financial stipulation remained in effect till the mid-1940s, when all blind people, regardless of financial status, became eligible. In 1951, the visual eligibility requirement was modified by legislation to central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting glasses or a field of vision that, at its widest diameter, subtended an angular distance of no greater than 20 degrees. And in 1952, blind children were, by legislation, declared eligible. Other congressional acts expanded the program in 1962 to include music materials and again in 1966 to include individuals with other physical impairments that prevent the reading of standard print.

Today, blind, visually impaired, and handicapped individuals must be certified by competent authority that they are so impaired that they cannot see to read a book or cannot hold a book and turn its pages. Once they are registered, eligible individuals are supplied with NLS-produced record- and tape-playing machines that meet their specific needs and at the same time protect the copyright of books and periodicals reproduced for their sole use. Machines are provided on loan and remain the property of the government.

Each year NLS receives permission from publishers to reproduce with no royalties charged more than 2,000 book titles that are made available on loan through the participating regional and local libraries. NLS produces and distributes free some 70 weekly, monthly, and quarterly periodicals. Books, magazines, and playback machines are generally sent via postage-free mail.

Collection Policies and Development

Over the years, NLS has systematically developed a collection that provides access to some 220,000 recorded and embossed titles in 16 million copies that meet a broad range of interests and tastes and provide access to the same books and information made available to the nonhandicapped through public libraries. As in any public library, the general reading needs of the aged, the young, professionals, and others are reflected proportionally in the

collection in relation to overall readership served. This collection policy assures a basic, uniform standard of reading materials available throughout the country.

In selecting a book, NLS librarians consider the books in the subject area that have already been produced, the medium previously used, the audience to which the title will appeal, and the book's potential popularity. Ad hoc advisors consisting of regional librarians, representatives from organized consumer groups, and individual users often contribute to the initial identification of priorities. Titles that serve propagandistic purposes are generally excluded.

The nonfiction collection encompasses representative coverage in all major subject areas plus selective coverage in subareas with attention given to the following:

1. Broad trends in public interests, knowledge of developing theories and practices in the various subject areas, and availability of appropriate titles suitable for reproduction; and,
2. Authenticity and documentation, development of materials of particular interest to readers, classic and standard materials, contemporary works, specialized works of interest to educated laymen, and the work's potential for informational reading and reference.

Nonfiction titles (usually of a general interest, non-textbook nature) span the gamut of knowledge, i.e., philosophy, religion, the social and physical sciences, languages, applied science, the arts, literature, and geography and history.

The overall collection is divided into four levels:

1. *Minimal.* A subject area that is out of scope for the collection and in which few selections are made beyond basic informational works.
2. *Basic Informational.* Materials that provide an immediate understanding of a subject and indicate the varieties of information available elsewhere, i.e., selected editions of important works, general surveys, important biographies, and perhaps periodicals.
3. *Support.* A collection intended to support independent study, including a wide range of basic works as well as selections from the works of secondary or controversial writers.
4. *Research.* A collection of sufficient source materials to permit a fair degree of independent research.

Novels and other works of fiction are selected on the basis of anticipated demand by a readership of different tastes, interests, purposes, and reading levels. NLS subscribes to the American Library Association (ALA) *Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read Statement*. The collection therefore includes representative works of literary quality and cultural value along with works of popular and even experimental interest.

Generally about half of the titles selected each year are new and about half are retrospective; these are divided about equally between fiction and nonfiction. Juvenile titles make up about 20 percent of the collection.

Periodicals meet the previously mentioned criteria and reflect current thinking in various fields represented, hold high interest and demand, are representative in their points of view, and provide recreational as well as informational reading.

Foreign-language books make up a growing segment of the NLS collection, with emphasis on books published in Spanish. In addition, the languages represented in the mass-produced collection include French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Polish, Laotian, and Vietnamese. A special collection of foreign-language books contains one or more copies of titles in approximately thirty different languages.

Established in 1962, the Music Section of NLS directly serves a clientele of individuals interested in musical scores, textbooks, and instructional materials. Braille and talking books are devoted to music theory, appreciation, and history, and some cassette tapes include instruction in beginning, intermediate, and advanced piano, organ, and guitar.

Copyright and Cataloging

Copyright clearance is of special importance in a program that reproduces more than 2,000 titles per year. Day-to-day personal and electronic liaison with the LC Copyright Office is especially useful in attempts to determine whether an out-of-print book is in the public domain.

The services of the Copyright Office in large measure make NLS book reproduction possible, for through that office, NLS is often able to quickly establish that a title is under copyright and that permission for its reproduction for distribution to blind and physically handicapped readers already exists.

Paragraph 710 of Chapter 7, Public Law 94-553, General Revision of the Copyright Law, is devoted to the use of copyrighted material by the blind and physically handicapped. The Act specifies that the copyright owner may voluntarily grant to the Library "a license to reproduce the copyrighted work by means of braille or similar tactile symbols, or by fixation of a reading of the work in a phonorecord, or both, and to distribute the resulting copies or

phonorecords solely for the use of the blind and physically handicapped and under limited conditions to be specified in the standardized forms."

Under Paragraph 710, the Register of Copyrights, in consultation with the Director of NLS, has inserted a relevant clause in part 8 of *Form TX*, the application for copyright registration. Under this clause, the copyright formally permits free reproduction of the work "solely for the blind and physically handicapped and under the conditions and limitations prescribed by the regulations of the Copyright Office." Occasionally a prominent author will agree to narrate his or her own work for the talking books program.

The Copyright Office is the first place NLS turns to when it seeks permission to reproduce a work, either in or out of the public domain. If permission already is on file at LC, NLS is able to proceed with scheduling the title for production. If not, data from the registration provide ready access to the copyright owner in order to request permission to reproduce the book.

After a book has been reproduced, it is cataloged as a recorded or brailled work, a procedure that relies heavily on the bibliographic services of LC. Two-thirds of the print books reproduced by NLS have already been cataloged at LC. NLS bibliographers only need take the basic Library MARC record electronically from the computer file and adapt it, omitting data specific to the print version and adding special-format information. Many titles not cataloged at LC are found through the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), which includes MARC records.

Another important library service that NLS relies on is the computerized production of the Union Catalog, a quarterly compilation of reading materials available through the network of participating regional and local libraries. This computer-output-microfiche (COM) catalog includes some 72,000 NLS-produced titles (16 million copies), approximately 15,000 locally produced network contributions, close to 5,000 non-English entries, and around 70,000 entries from Recording for the Blind. The latter include master copies of textbooks and vocational materials that NLS does not reproduce. Entries from libraries outside the U.S. total 60,000.

The catalog database is maintained on the Library of Congress main-frame computer. Every three months, the Library's Automated Systems Office updates the NLS file and produces the data tapes used in making the current catalog available to the NLS network on microfiche.

These quarterly compilations include all input from network libraries that have produced new recordings on their own. The actual machine-readable cataloging record (MARC) of locally produced talking books is compiled by NLS and then transferred electronically to LC computer for inclusion in the next union catalog.

Book ordering, legal services, and printing are other areas of the Library of Congress that support NLS operations.

Books and Machines

The narrative reproduction or braille embossing of an entire book is completed under contract to NLS. Some nonprofit braille contractors have been working in this field as long as federal programs for the blind have existed. A principal NLS role in the production of books is development of technical specifications and frequent on-site inspections to assure that contractors meet prescribed specifications and maintain high standards of quality.

The typical recorded book takes about six months to produce from the date the book is ordered. The average time from assignment to a contractor through final shipment is about five months for cassettes and two months for flexible discs. For timely material, shorter production periods are frequently achieved. In the fall of 1987, NLS obtained and reproduced Mikhail Gorbachev's *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* in nine days, providing copies to interested readers in time for the Reagan-Gorbachev summit. Similarly, an expedited production schedule made Alex Haley's *Roots*, the first NLS 4-track cassette book, available on both cassette and flexible disc soon after the 1977 TV show.

Recorded and embossed books are distributed from the contracting producer directly to regional and subregional libraries. The NLS copy allotment system gives each library advance notice of the title's availability and a suggested number of copies. The library, in turn, lets NLS know the number of copies it can use. Production amounts are based on these figures, plus backup copies. Each regional library keeps at least one copy of every NLS title on its shelves or in circulation.

NLS response to local demands is seen in the reproduction of *Secrets* by Danielle Steel. This popular bestseller was reproduced in three formats: 2,861 flexible-disc, 1,264 cassette, and 66 braille books.

Flexible discs account for only 90 titles a year, but they are reproduced in larger quantities to meet immediate demand for bestsellers and other popular titles. Flexible-disc books compare economically with the ordinary paperback book because they are easy and relatively inexpensive to produce in large quantities. In 1994, 203,940 copies were produced with an average of seven discs per container (the equivalent of 14 hours of reading material per container). The cost was \$4.27 per copy. All books selected for flexible disc are also produced as cassettes for permanent retention in the collection.

Recorded cassette is the most popular and versatile format, and most titles are produced in this medium. The NLS collection contains almost 27,000 titles, most of them in

4-track long-play format. The average book is somewhat shorter than those recorded on flexible disc and requires 2.4 cassettes.

Each year, NLS produces more than 300 titles in grade 2 English braille. This format is of great importance to the blind people who read braille. It is the only reading medium for the deaf/blind population served.

Rigid discs, which were the only recorded medium for the programs's first three decades, were phased out in 1986 because of the greater interest in the cassette medium and also because of high costs.

To control production costs and assure copyright protection, NLS has developed slow-speed, high-volume records and tapes that can be played *only* on specialized equipment designed and produced under NLS auspices. The unique four-track cassette tape players, for instance, are capable of carrying up to six hours of recorded data, four times the amount available on conventional cassette tapes. This means a book of 300 or so pages can be recorded on three cassettes instead of twelve. This compact format also makes for easier handling for patrons and for shipping through the mails. The average cassette book costs about \$5 to produce.

Cassette books in the four-track format operate at 15/16 inches per second, while the disc reproductions turn at $8\frac{1}{3}$ revolutions per minute. (Innovative talking books were reproduced at $33\frac{1}{3}$ rpm in the 1930s, long before long-play records of that speed became commercially popular.) Many playback machines can be operated at variable speeds, allowing the reader to speed up output and take less time to finish a book.

Playback equipment includes a talking-book machine for discs, in appearance much like a portable record player; a cassette book machine, appearing much like a tape recorder (but designed only for output); and the E-1 easy machine, a simplified cassette player for seniors and others who find basic equipment difficult to operate. NLS has also developed a combination disc/tape player for use primarily in senior centers and other places where group readings are easily organized or where space is an important consideration.

Quality assurance of disc and tape-playing machines begins with the development of specifications by NLS engineers. NLS also checks work samples to make certain the company is qualified to meet high standards of production.

For example, a contractor recently built 20,000 E-1 cassette players. For at least four days of every other production week, one NLS staff person at the plant made sure a .65 AQL rating was maintained. This rating allows no more than one defect per every 100 units assembled. Each lot was approved by the NLS representative prior to shipment, and a specified unit triggered a full-performance inspection by the NLS engineering laboratory in Washington.

NLS also inspects other items produced, for example batteries, needles, and even containers cassette players are shipped in. The standard cassette player costs about \$170, an easy machine about \$160, and a combination machine (phonograph and cassette player) about \$400.

The regional and local libraries themselves process requests for the equipment, while the NLS multistate centers (warehouses) maintain, store, and ship the machines. Under federal laws dating to 1904 all of the books in braille, talking books, and listening equipment are shipped postage-free through the U.S. mails. Equipment is registered through regional or local lending agencies (often a participating library), with serial numbers and registration data, complete from date of manufacture, maintained in one computer file.

Accessories are provided to readers who need special help in using machines. NLS equipment includes remote-control on/off switches including a breath switch, extension levers for cassette controls, a tone-arm clip for the talking-book machine, pillow speakers, headsets, an amplifier (with medical certification of need), and even a solar panel for recharging batteries where electricity is not available.

The NLS Library Network

NLS is the head of a cooperating network of more than 143 regional and subregional libraries, administrating agencies, and machine-lending agencies that provide free reading services and materials to eligible individuals. NLS and its three multistate centers are the network's principal source of informational materials and listening equipment, all meeting uniformly high standards achieved through the management and controls of a centralized agency.

Operating under standards developed through the American Library Association and guidelines from NLS, the network libraries register eligible users, shelve the materials, access the NLS-supplied *Union Catalog* on microfiche, and, on request, lend for prescribed periods to time recorded books and volumes embossed in braille to eligible users. Network libraries also process requests for and provide instruction in the use of cassette players and other book-related machines.

Regional libraries are usually administered and funded by state and local governments. Funding is generally provided through state agencies and federal grants authorized under the federal Library Services and Construction Act. Subregional libraries serving at least 200 readers are usually located in a local public library and are under the jurisdiction of a regional library.

The receipt, storage, and lending of NLS books and magazines and related services require a much broader range of procedures and record keeping than that required of

libraries serving other clientele. Network libraries gather and maintain information both on users and reading materials and equipment. User data include name, address, age, media in use, special preferences (i.e., language, reading level, male or female narrators, and any objections to sex, violence, and profanity) in reading materials. User records contain lists of all books read, so that patrons will not be sent duplicate selections. Records also include any instances of abusive use of reading materials or equipment, since repeated incidents can precipitate withdrawal of service.

The libraries also maintain records of title identification, number of copies in the collection, special features of the titles (age, suitability, narrator, language, media), reserve lists, and interlibrary loans.

When groups of eligible users live in or frequent the same place (nursing home, senior center, public library), network libraries frequently establish a deposit collection of 100 or more titles at the site. Books in these collections are loaned directly to readers. The deposit collections are particularly popular in cities without regional or subregional libraries. In 1993, network libraries served 27,500 deposit collections.

Efforts are underway to improve services at network libraries through automation. Large libraries have obtained automated circulation systems and NLS has made its READS circulation software available to smaller libraries. An information system (NLSNET) is being installed at all network libraries for data exchange.

Still another element in the network is the machine-lending agency (sometimes synonymous with a regional or subregional library), signer of a *Lending Agency Service Agreement* that established responsibility for the inventory and distribution of the talking-book cassette machines and other government-produced and owned equipment.

Complementing the network libraries are three regionally located warehouses called multistate centers (MSCs). The MSCs house and lend on interlibrary loan, when needed to back up the network collections, all reading and listening materials available in the NLS program. Included are all NLS-produced handcopied braille books, special collections of lesser-used materials such as older recorded and braille books, and back issues of periodicals. Multistate centers also store machines and accessories, publications, forms, and exhibit materials. Parent agencies of the MSCs are state agencies or independent nonprofit organizations.

Full-time NLS consultants assist the network libraries in all phases of their programs. Day-to-day consultation is available by telephone and on-site visits to each network unit are scheduled at least once every two years. During these visits, the NLS consultants compare one-site performance with American Library Association standards and guidelines.

Other NLS support is provided through national conferences held every other year, with the 1994 conference held in May in Denver. In the off years, conferences are scheduled in each of the four regions.

Patron Information and Outreach

Users are made aware of new books through *Braille Book Review* and *Talking Book Topics*, bimonthly magazines that contain program information and annotated listings of recently produced books. Annotations are vital for blind and physically handicapped readers, who cannot browse before selecting a book and do not have wide access to reviews and other material available to print readers. These magazines are distributed via the automated comprehensive mailing list system (CMLS). A contractor maintains CMLS, generating some 5 million mailing labels annually from the database.

CMLS data submitted by participating libraries and machine-lending agencies include the user's name, address, age, listening machine(s) in use, and any current magazine subscriptions. Utilizing the CMLS labels, periodicals, sans advertising, are mailed directly to the users by the reproduction companies, often arriving as quickly as their print counterparts do. Individual CMLS data is confidential, but the list does provide useful summaries, such as 750,000 magazine subscriptions for patrons.

A variety of NLS publications supplement *Talking Book Topics* and *Braille Book Review* in providing information for patrons. *Braille Books, For Younger Readers*, and *Cassette Books* are published annually or biennially. *Foreign Language Books, Magazines in Special Media*, and *Volunteers Who Produce Books* are produced every two to three years as needed. Major subject bibliographies are regularly published, ranging from children's fiction and adult bestsellers, westerns, romances, and mysteries to religion and inspiration, biographies in the arts, government and politics, and fiction for readers aged twelve to twenty.

All patron publications are produced in large print and on flexible disc or in braille as appropriate; subject bibliographies are produced in all three media. Patron orders for most of these publications are maintained on CMLS and provide the basis for production quantities.

Although most of the direct contact with individual users generally is by regional and subregional library staffs, the NLS reference service answers bibliographic and other library-related questions from users, the library network, and the general public. Many times the broader reference resources of LC must be tapped to respond to these queries.

One section within NLS was created to deal directly with patron concerns. The Consumer Relations Officer, a program user, gives patrons a resource beyond their network

libraries for questions about program and materials. The Network Services Section also provides patron assistance, and staff regularly produce short bibliographies at user request.

Another phase of the NLS program involves a wide-ranging program of public information to inform potential users of the availability of NLS library services. Part of this effort, conducted mainly by or through the regional libraries, is the demonstration collection, a sampling of reading materials and equipment set up in public libraries and other institutions to help acquaint the public with NLS materials and services.

NLS exhibits at a dozen or more national conventions annually, generally to groups dealing with health issues, blindness, or special populations (exceptional children, the aged) that might need NLS services. Backdrops, exhibit handouts, and items such as posters and brochures are also available to network libraries for local outreach efforts.

Recently, this public information program has concentrated on nursing homes and senior citizen centers where many seniors and their social directors have been unaware of NLS and its programs. This effort was in response to a study showing that 36 percent of hospitalized older Americans and 68 percent of those living in nursing homes are unable to read newsprint even with corrective lenses; 68 percent of hospital and 67 percent of nursing home residents have restricted mobility (some of which may prevent them from reading regular print books), and 51 percent of hospital and 61 percent of nursing home residents have had strokes, many being eligible for NLS-produced talking books.

Leadership

1994 finds the sixty-three-year-old NLS actively playing the role of a mature, well-developed leader of a program that is uniquely a combination of federal, state, local, and individual participation. It is acknowledged world-wide as the finest service of its kind anywhere.

This preeminence is in no small measure due to the long-time use of the vast resources within the Library of Congress, where copyright information and catalog databases are of constant value to the programs of NLS.

The FY94 NLS budget of \$42.7 million anticipates a net gain in the number of users of approximately one percent per year, a growth level expected to remain constant.

The current structure of NLS is ideal for maintaining high standards of programs and procedures. NLS is set up with a director at its head and two operating divisions—Materials Development and Network—to implement a variety of highly successful programs.

The director manages NLS, forms policies, plans programs, coordinates the Materials Development and Network Divisions, plans and implements automation activities, and

coordinates research and development. An important responsibility of the Office of the Director is day-to-day liaison with non-governmental agencies, such as the American Council of the Blind, the Braille Authority of North America, the National Braille Association, and the National Federation of the Blind.

The Office of the Director also includes the Administrative and Publications and Media sections. The Publications and Media Section promotes outreach programs such as the one for senior citizens with impaired vision, produces patron publications, and publishes program newsletters and other informational material.

The Materials Development Division selects, produces, and distributes recordings, tapes, and braille volumes and supervises the production of record and cassette players and specialized equipment developed for physically handicapped individuals. Its Braille Development section creates braille transcription and proofreading courses and certifies individuals who become proficient.

The Network Division coordinates with regional and subregional libraries, determines and enforces user eligibility requirements, monitors service to users, manages an international interlibrary lending service, and directs programs for blind and handicapped U.S. citizens living abroad. Network Division sections include Inventory Management, Music, Network Services, and Reference.

NLS Today

NLS's *raison d'être* clearly is that of a library for a clientele with extremely varied tastes and needs. As the result of specific federal legislation, LC and NLS have a mandate to serve as the primary source of reading matter not only for the nation's blind population, but for visually impaired and physically handicapped individuals as well.

Through improved technology and management techniques, this service has grown in quality as well as in quantity, and will continue to do so through effective centralized management and strong programs of research and development and quality assurance.

Service is NLS's primary goal, and through the development and active support of network libraries, a high quality of efficient service to patrons is assured.

The long-range success of NLS has been built on a foundation of cooperative efforts both within and outside the federal government. There is no question that the prestige and status of the Library of Congress gives the reading programs for blind and physically handicapped individuals a status that would be difficult to duplicate.

At the same time, NLS has utilized its position effectively as a leader of the cooperative building of a smooth-running network of specialized libraries and ancillary agencies that are delivering an unmatched program of reading and informational services.

Congressional support of reading programs for blind and physically handicapped readers, especially veterans and the elderly, has been unwavering, with NLS functioning as a major division within the Congress's very own library. In large measure this congressional support is a reflection of the endorsements of the blind and handicapped users of NLS materials and services, many of whom help develop and carry out plans and policies at all levels. Equally supportive are hundreds of nonhandicapped volunteers, such as the Telephone Pioneers who help repair talking book machines and other NLS equipment, and volunteer braillists and narrators throughout the country.

Librarians of Congress

The Library of Congress has provided library services for blind and, since 1966, physically handicapped readers, under the administration of the following Librarians of Congress:

John Russell Young	1897-1899
Herbert Putnam	1899-1939
Archibald MacLeish	1939-1944
Luther Harris Evans	1945-1953
Lawrence Quincy Mumford	1954-1974
Daniel J. Boorstin	1975-1987
James H. Billington	1987-

Administrators of the National Library Service Program

From 1897 to 1946, the Library of Congress provided direct library service to blind readers through Service for the Blind under:

Etta Josselyn Giffin	1897-1912
Gertrude T. Rider	1912-1925
Margaret D. McGuffey	1925-1927
Maude G. Nichols	1927-1946

In 1946, Service for the Blind, still headed by Maude Nichols, became part of the Library of Congress organizational unit that in 1931 had begun producing and distributing to regional libraries for circulation reading materials for blind readers. Initially called the Project, Books for the Blind, and now known as the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, this program has been administered by:

Herman H.B. Meyer	1931-1935
Martin A. Roberts	1935-1940
Robert A. Voorus	1940-1944
Joseph P. Blickensderfer	1945-1946
Xenophon P. Smith	1946-1948
George W. Schwegmann, Jr.	1948-1951
Donald G. Patterson	1951-1957
Robert S. Bray	1957-1972
Frank Kurt Cylke	1973-